

## ***Exemplary results and guiding questions***

### ***Workshop 1 Friday and Saturday***

**2/1**

Less results than a few exemplary answers to the four guiding questions:

1. What raised your special interest in the three inputs?

- Mission is not only evangelism, but also social engagement.
- Mission does not only refer to outsiders, but mission also has strengthening functions for the congregations and their members?
- Strong vote: mission as "presentation of God's presence", with the goal: "well-being of creation and humanity."

2. What in the inputs has special relevance in your context?

- Related to the statement that mission is more involvement than conversion: On the one hand sympathetic, as there is a trend locally in Germany "faith yes - Church no", in many cases a syncretism prevails. At the same time, there is a desire for unambiguity. Both go together, but how?

3. Where do you disagree or have opposing thoughts?

- The goal of the mission is to share the Gospel, and this must not be neglected and not come short.

4. What must be taken up in further work?

- Reflecting on how mission is practically incorporated into the congregational context.

**5/1**

Impressions from the conversation in workshop 5/1

- What role does being a minority play with regard to the topic of diversity? Is the approach not different from arguing from a main-line church?
- Attitude towards diversity is not (only) a question of minority and majority?
- In German society, many people have no interest in church and in tradition at all. It is our task to show the relevance of (ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical) tradition.
- The main template "Church and Migration" of the EKvW was criticized for dividing too quickly into "stranger/guest" and "host". Christians from other countries are still seen as strangers, even if they have lived in Germany for a long time.
- The Reformed Church in Hungary wants to be "church with others". This is a challenge, which is exemplified by the treatment of the Roma.
- Humanity is not a question of "being liberal", it is simply Christian.
- In Germany, "classism" is also a problem, i.e. the feeling of inferiority due to alleged class membership. This is not just about the feeling, but also about

but also about being forced into this role. This also needs to be addressed in the church context.

- We still have a long way to go in recognizing others in the church. The vision in Westphalia is to move from a white majority church (main line church) to a vibrant and diverse church.

## ***Workshop 2 Friday and Saturday***

**2/2**

Theses from the workshop:

1) Mission needs a heterogeneous setting of diversity. This diversity can be experienced not only in international encounters, but also in the diversity of the world at our place.

2) Intercultural congregations are necessary in order to do justice to the fact that the society has become diverse culturally and in terms of different Christian traditions. This requires a conversation with each other about how a largely homogeneous community can develop into a heterogeneous community, in a mutual process of rapprochement. At the same time, it also needs protected spaces in such a congregation, where people can meet among themselves.

3) The synod's thesis paper lacks a clear assignment and definition of the relationship between mission and evangelism (evangelism as the heart of mission, because mission is not possible without evangelism). Tolerance is needed between the different theological and spiritual imprints, which sometimes can find each other in conversation, but sometimes will not find common ground.

**5/2**

Lively discussion, in which the moderators were also asked to provide content.

Consensus of speakers: One must distinguish between the church as an organization and as the body of Christ (spiritual community, spanning the world), but the two must not be separated from each other.

Especially in diaspora situations it is important to remain recognizable with one's own profile.

My missionary activity begins with myself, when I make it clear to myself why and in what sense a biblical text should be significant for me.

A church is only a church if it is filled with God's love, burns for all people and wants the fullness of life for all.

This does not become concrete in theory, but in the environment of the local church, in the opening of the local church, also in the self-surrender in the neighborhood.

Mission ultimately only happens in the local church: where people come together concretely and form a community of Christians and concretely work in different dimensions (education, diaconia, culture).

Participant: We probably first suspect not to think from the comfort zone of the organized majority.

For all the joy of Fresh X: I already notice that they almost all arise in the "cappuccino zone" and rather rarely in social hot spots.

Ehlhaus et al. for further work on the thesis paper: Use Mt.28 in the Basic Bible version: Jesus said: "Go therefore to all nations and invite people to become my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! And teach them to do all that I have commanded you. Know that I am with you every day until the end of the world.

TN:Concrete request for suggestions, help and practical examples for the Westphalian local churches.

### ***Workshop 3 Friday and Saturday***

**5/3**

Results of workshop 3 on Saturday morning

1. Mission no longer means only learning from each other, but above all learning with each other. This is no longer possible in bilateral relationships, because they do not reflect enough the whole life reality of churches worldwide. In a few years the German churches will no longer be "giving" churches, especially "taking" churches in view of the situation of a massive shortage of pastors.
2. we have to distinguish between the positive experiences in mission and the negative experiences of mission. We need to take a close look historically at which side the missionaries were on (strengthening colonial structures or advocacy for local people against exploitation and oppression).
3. we have to take into account that the term "mission" has hurt people through negative experiences of exploitation etc. has hurt people. However, this did not happen in all churches. Nevertheless, all churches have a responsibility to examine their own share of hurtful (power) structures and to find a new relationship to people who have suffered from the experiences of church and colonization, as the UCC is trying to work through with regard to Native Americans.

### ***Workshop 4 Friday and Saturday***

**2/4**

Session: What does equal fellowship mean in mission?

For historical reasons, the different churches have developed in very different ways and have dealt with very different issues and developed very different emphases due to the different topics and have developed different emphases.

Creating spaces to meet in 'greater breadth', to work together on these concrete topics, to get to know each other better and to understand each other better in the process.

The "old way of thinking" of the respective partner churches hinders the togetherness - address this openly and work on it. Strengthen the view of seeing each other as enrichment. There are many obstacles to equality (on both sides); there is still a long way to go to eliminate them. The donor/taker mentality, which has existed for years in some cases, must be overcome.

There are promising developments in the context of concrete partnership work. Mutual visits are being redesigned in this regard.

In fact, Corona is currently creating a 'new' bond: the shared worldwide experience of the same threat.

In addition, there is a concrete connectedness through intercession and the increased digitalization.

Community at eye level - a fairy tale?? What does 'eye level' mean - can it be achieved?

The better you know each other, the better eye level succeeds.

If 'eye level' is a reciprocal process of showing weaknesses/uncertainties and sharing strengths - how can we create spaces in which everyone dares to be helpless, questioning and weak?

not-knowing' in order to really break open from there? What are the experiences?

There are good experiences with changed structures of partnership visits: An 'evening for us' - sharing with each other also weakness and perplexities.

Sometimes the guests do not dare to speak openly about the content (maybe other opinions on some topics) because of financial dependence.

Here: create 'safe spaces' for true exchange. A good possibility: sharing the Bible (reading the Bible through the eyes of others...). Exchange with each other without judging and listen to Jesus together. Listening to each other and learning from each other!

Mission means: awakening - where does it already exist, where do we still need it? In view of the church in Germany there is often little sense of awakening on the ground how can this change! Crossing borders, listening in the living space and discovering new things!

Discover 'diaconia' as a cross-cutting theme in the worldwide community!

Equality not only between continents, but also between churches in a country. Ecumenism must really become practice!!

Do we have to do something different structurally? Well... 'Weite wirkt' is also a while ago... a while ago...did we already have that on it? Have we moved on since then?

Yes, mission must become mainstream!

Mission is an expression of life of the church - in our own country and in view of those with whom we are connected worldwide!

We are not all equal, but nobody has everything and nobody has nothing!

## 5/4

Minutes Plenary Workshop 5/4, Saturday, 10.45 - 11.45 a.m.

Communion of equal partners in mission / VEM: Communion of equal partners in mission (Thesis 6)

Partnerships are not exclusively about material issues. Where is the center of Christianity today?

The "center" of Christianity cannot be localized geographically; the Good News is a worldwide one.

While material resources still play an important role, the dependency relationships still associated with them are more important. We should focus on issues such as education, theology and liturgy.

Peace and learning together as important tasks - what can it look like?

Tanzania as a country with many Christians and Muslims is an example of peaceful coexistence, which is only possible through radical openness and mutual acceptance. These and similar experiences in Africa and Asia are inspiring examples for Europe and Germany. The functioning partnership work of the UEM, which is planned, carried out, evaluated and communicated together, shows what this can look like.

Do we need more of this openness and acceptance in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia? And how do we get there?

Getting to know each other personally is central to this: Those who experience how Christians from another continent live and what moves them will gain valuable experience. It is precisely the diversity in partnerships that may enable us to support each other and learn together. This is a special treasure of our churches!

Is the togetherness experienced as "at eye level"?

In the diverse partnerships between Tanzania and Germany, we now see ourselves as colleagues from whom all have something to give and something to receive. Personal encounters play an important role in this. The contact is now also possible by the increasing use of the Internet, which facilitates encounters between people, for example via Zoom. While there is indeed still a different economic level, the spiritual dimension is the more important one. Celebrating our faith together, practically on partnership Sundays for example, and exchanging personnel, is central to seeing eye to eye. And the African churches also have something material to contribute, for example, money has already been collected to help German congregations that are in financial difficulties.

## ***Workshop 5 Friday and Saturday***

**2/5**

### **1. Actors and receivers of mission**

Western churches can also be the receivers of mission, they are not only the actors. Intercultural mission is a way of thinking of all people in the church, but we need a special training for that, it's not just happening. Then we can see, that it's a win-win-situation: to work intercultural shows different backgrounds and they will come together

2. The complex phenomenon of language First it's a question of understanding each other, so you first need translation. But the use of language leads to our existence of humanity. And it is a very intimate aspect of our spirituality: When we pray we use our own language. Multicultural liturgies can be helpful for that, so we can learn from one another.

### **3. Discipleship**

Especially the IKK churches show, that this is an important aspect. Mission is learning process. Speaking of discipleship is a crucial issue in the mission agenda. It means to invite people to grow more in that material of christianity. How can we lead people to grow? This learning process is a learning together: in Mt 28 we see disciples who had to go to make disciples.

### **4. Hegemony**

Is "working intercultural" in German mainstream churches really a step back from our hegemony in ecumenical relations? Or just another way "to humble oneself in order to be exalted"? (cf. Lk 14:11) Western churches are hegemonial and see themselves as „the“. That

needs a conversion to become really intercultural. We need to have tools and give an appetizer to become intercultural.

#### 5. Racism

It's impossible to introduce intercultural encounters without talking about racism. We need to put racism on the agenda!

### 5/5

#### Mission in Intercultural Encounters and "In-between Spaces" (Thesis 7)

Impulses:

Mehrdad Sepheri Fard:

Knowledge of the respective cultural everyday life is indispensable. Only then can one recognize what people from different cultures need or what knowledge of Christianity they have. Understanding people is the most important thing in mission.

Sometimes we make the experience that there is no interest in a religion. The goal of the Farsi speaking churches is not to found their own church, but to become part of a (German!) church, like in a family. For this, German congregations would have to become even more open. Such attempts often failed, because German congregations were often not open to change as well.

Lydia Tigges:

The Lydia church in Dortmund does not have a differentiated understanding of mission strongly on the respective images brought along. The theological biographies in the Lydia congregation are extraordinarily diverse, and it is a great challenge to bring them together. In order for community to function, it is necessary to enter into conversation with one another. This has changed people and made them more articulate. This has made participation in the *Missio Dei* possible. The image of a flat-sharing community was often used, where everyone has their own rooms, but there are also common spaces where people meet. Mission plays a clear role in the sense of the theses. The Christians of the first generation found a clear yes to this. Therefore the theses and the discussion they have triggered are very welcome, because they provide a good basis for understanding between different people and because it strengthens precisely those people who want to let others share what fills their hearts with love.

James Brown (Church of Scotland and IKK):

Despite all the agreement on the content of the mission paper the question remains whether we are still talking about mission in the sense that IKK congregations would understand? This is also different, possibly the term "outreach" instead of "mission" fits better. Also, the image of the church as an exodus people seems to fit better with the Theses' understanding of the church.

Discussion:

The mission theses seem to be very restrained, wanting to move but not really to run away and meet each other.

Communication is central, understanding mission also means to come into conversation with each other.

What is needed is a hermeneutic of the missionary, i.e. an expanded understanding of mission,

that has contours in which different understandings can find each other. The center would be mission as part of God's mission, aiming at the resonance of God's message. Around this center everything can be assigned. This assignment is still missing in the theses.

The term intercultural interstices comes from Homi Bhabha and describes a "third" space where different cultures meet and "hybrid" cultures can emerge.

When one is bound up in a structure, one becomes operationally blind. Such an intercultural interspace enables a new perspective. Into these in-between spaces one can invite, one needs courage, because one does not find one's own traditions and cultures. It is important to give people the right of co-determination from the beginning!

External perspective:

there is still a lack of perspectives that are critical of mission (and of the church in general). Such an inclusion could be helpful for the clarification of terms.

Concluding words:

Whatever word we use for mission: We should look at what God wants from us, that is where we should be. Doing God's will is mission.

It is a challenge not to be too quick to say that we are all one. Diversity also has its justification. Only then are we credible for an internal dialogue in view of different meanings of mission we address interlocutors as the "world out there" (Act 17)